Conversion of cultivable land into desert

†2029. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that cultivable land is being converted into deserts in various parts of the country;

(b) if so, whether Government are going to take any step to prevent conversion of fertile land into desert; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) No sir. Reports have indicated that on account of generation of suitable technologies and adoption of these technologies and their dissemination through appropriate Centrally Sponsored Schemes desert area has been contained.

(b) and (c) The Ministry of Rural Development is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Programme of Desert Development in the country with the objective of mitigating the adverse effects of desertification, combating desertification, restoring ecological balance by harnessing, conserving and developing land, water, vegetative cover for raising land productivity. Uptil now an area of 4.57 lakh sq. kms. has been covered under the scheme at a total expenditure of Rs. 423 crores. In addition, the Ministry of Environment and Forests is in the process of preparation of a National Action Plan (NAP) for Combating Desertification and Drought in the country.

Prices of Fertilizers

†2030. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have increased or propose to increase rates of fertilizers;

(b) if so, whether Government would consider to reduce or check the prices of fertilizers; and

---

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) The prices of fertilizers like Urea, DAP, MOP and Complexes were last increased as per the Budget 2000-2001.

(b) and (c) The decision to increase the selling prices of fertilizers was necessitated by consideration of fiscal substainability as also of balanced nutrient application. While there is no proposal to reduce the prices of fertilizers, their prices are being kept in check. Price of Urea which is the only controlled fertilizer is being kept in check through subsidy provided under the retention price-cum-subsidy scheme. In case of decontrolled phosphatic and potassic fertilisers, a concession is given to manufacturers and importers to enable sale of these fertilizers to farmers at reasonable prices which are indicated by the Government. Even at the present price level, substantial amount of subsidy would continue to be paid in the case of Urea and decontrolled fertilisers.

Wheat Stock

2031. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA:
SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a wheat glut in the country and there is no storage space available;

(b) whether Government have introduced the Commodity Loan Scheme or Barter Trade or Open Sale to unload the excessive stocks available;

(c) whether the present wheat stock is 254.17 lakh tons against a buffer norms of 154 lakh tons; and

(d) if so, what are Government views on this?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO): (a) No Sir, FCI has adequate storage capacity of 27.1 million tonnes against the total stocks of 24.9 million tonnes held by them as on 1.7.2000.